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Remembering
British Transport Police officers who
laid down their lives in the Great War.
How the BTP History Group marked
the events of a 100 years ago in 2014



In 2014, the British Transport Police History Group marked the centenary of the start of the Great War in a number of different ways

By recording the names of the 134 known officers who gave their lives in the Great War, in the Group's newsletter *History Lines* in the month that they died. The start of a four year project.

By taking part in the *Letter to an Unknown Soldier* national project

By arranging the laying of sixteen Remembrance Day wreaths at memorials around the country

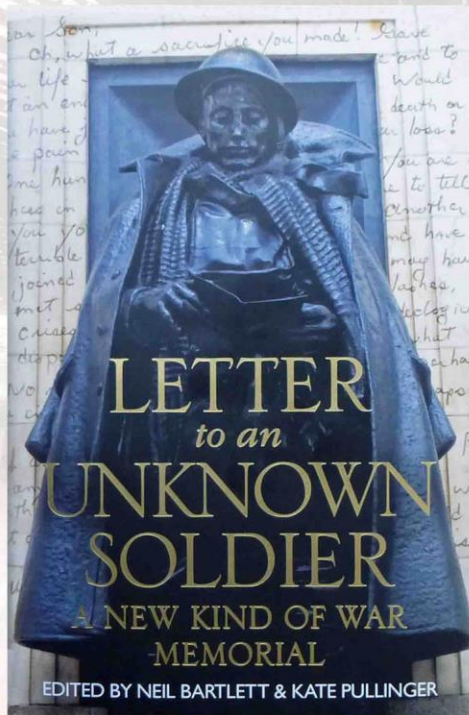
By visiting Belgium to lay wreaths at the Menin Gate nightly service at Ypres and visiting memorials and headstones of two who died

In June 2014 the *14-18 Now Project* invited members of the public to write the letter that the unknown soldier on Platform 1 at Paddington Station is reading. 21,439 people responded and all the letters were published on their web site.

Viv Head wrote on behalf of the dock policemen killed and John Owen wrote on behalf of the railway officers killed. 134 officers at least died in the Great War.



John Owen's letter was one of 140
selected to be included in the book
Letter to an Unknown Soldier



In many ways
this is a unique
record of a war
that began a 100
years ago. It is a
very moving book

Both letters are
reproduced here



Letter to an Unknown Soldier: Viv Head

Dear Old Bill, As a policeman, yours was not an easy beat. Along the wharves and quays of an industrial dockland community that so often brought out the good in people and then again, sometimes the not so good. You could so easily have carried on wearing the blue, performing a worthy duty on the home front. But that is not you is it? No. You did not choose the easy way, you joined a nobler course as did several of your colleagues. Do you remember Smithy, Welsh Evan and old Henry whose helmet was always too big for him? Aye, them and a few others also joined the cause only to fall in battle.

But you an unknown soldier? Well not to us. We know of your courage, your steadfastness and your willingness to risk all for what you knew to be right. No my friend, you are far from unknown; we talk about you all the time. You served your country in peace and war, you died as a soldier but your old mob knew you as the man who we were proud to have alongside us in a tight corner. We knew you then and we know you now; you stand tall as you always did.

Viv Head, An Old Dock Copper
British Transport Police History Group

Letter to an Unknown Soldier: John Owen

Dear Tom,

Hope you don't mind if I call you Tom. But I seem to have got to know you quite well over the years. You see I was a policeman at Paddington Station for a number of years and I walked past you almost on a daily basis and each time I spared you a thought and what a great man you were, having given your life for Queen and country.

You will also be proud to know that royalty have been rubbing shoulders with you for decades. Members of the Royal Family and indeed other famous people boarded their train from Platform 1 where you now stand. My colleagues and I spent many hours keeping the royal train safe and escorting various dignitaries, but you've probably been watching these comings and goings for years.

You've probably also watched the unsavoury things that occurred right under your nose, the vagabonds and ruffians who frequented the station to commit crimes. Nothing much has changed since you were a boy.

My granddad served in the Great War and whilst he spoke little of his experience fighting abroad, I did find out some of what he went through. Having served in the Boer War in South Africa he went off to fight again in 1915 in the Gallipoli Campaign. Although he was seriously injured he fortunately survived to be repatriated to the UK and to live to a good age.

Continued

Letter to an Unknown Soldier: John Owen continued

So Tom, I can imagine what you may have gone through. But unfortunately you did not have the chance to see your grandson, like my grandfather did. So I'd just like to say to you, thank you, for sacrificing your life for my generation to be able to live in peace. I and very many more people will always be eternally grateful to you and the many millions of your comrades who gave up so much.

Tom, I may not be passing you very often these days, but I will never ever forget you as a great bloke. Thank you Tom and God Bless You.

John Owen
British Transport Police History Group
30th June 2014



Each month between August 2014 and November 2018 the names of railway and dock police officers who gave their lives in the Great War are being listed in the British Transport Police History Group newsletter *History Lines* in the month during which they died.

The extract here is from October 2014

ALBERT HENRY BARNES

Police Constable – North East Railway – York
Private 7804 1st Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment

Killed in Action 28th October 1914

Age 27 years

ARTHUR BAXTER


Police Constable – Midland Railway – Tilbury & Burton
Lance Corporal 4635 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards

Killed in Action 28th October 1914

Age 34 years

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them





Poppy wreaths were laid all across the country
when History Group members and serving
officers came together in Acts of Remembrance

And seven members of the Group travelled to
Ypres to lay wreaths at the Menin Gate and to
visit some of the cemeteries and memorials

Bill Rogerson
Glyn Thomas
Phil White
Viv Head

Ed Thompson
Martin Lambert
Rob Davison



Euston



Waterloo

St
Pancras





Birmingham
New Street

York



Manchester



Bristol





With the Welsh Assembly Government
Presiding Officer Dame Rosie Butler AM



And at Cardiff
Central Station

At the Pierhead Building at Cardiff Bay
Remembering dock officers across the country who gave their lives in the war

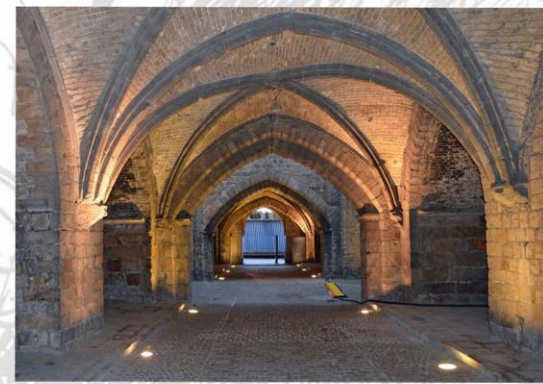


Edinburgh



Ypres

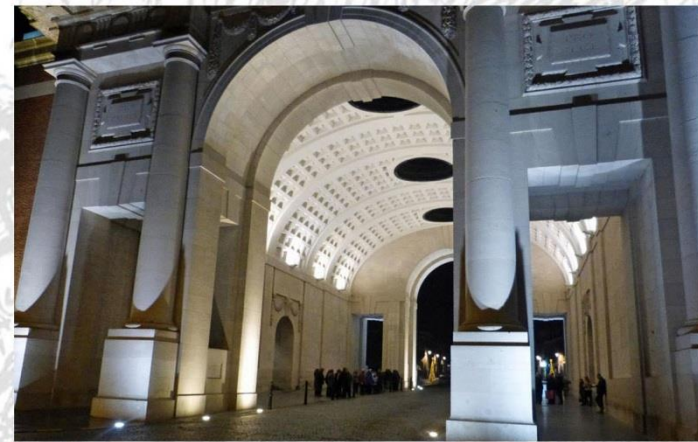
Beautifully rebuilt after being flattened by shelling 1914-18



Menin Gate

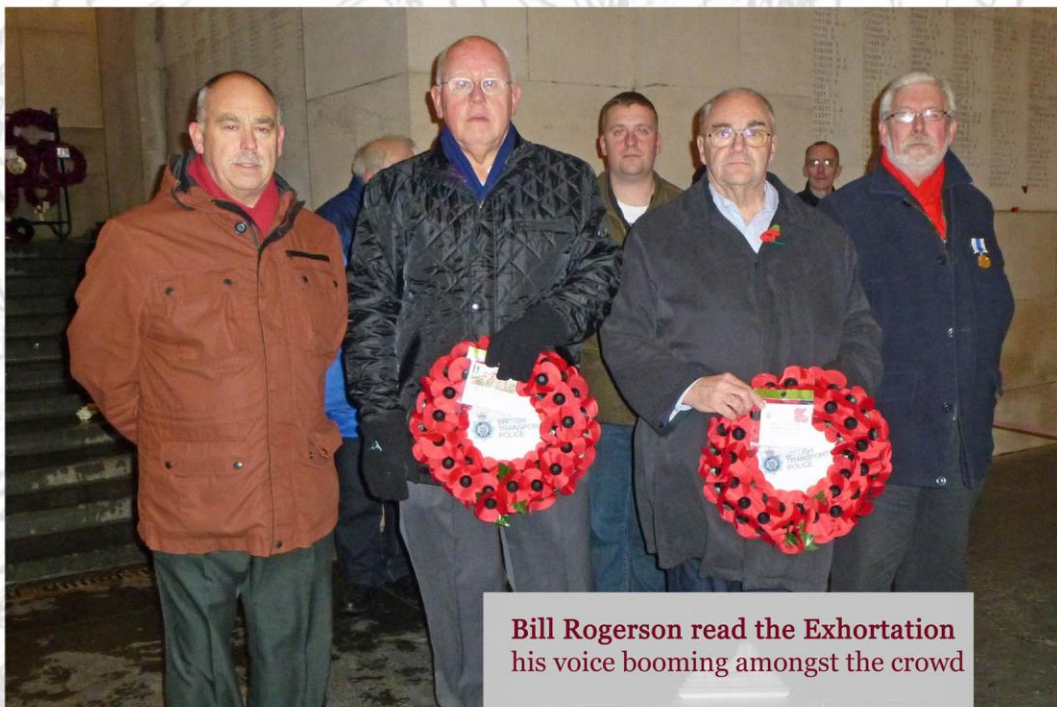
Tuesday 2nd December 2014

*Pupils of Peterhouse
Primary School, Norfolk*



Martin





Bill Rogerson read the Exhortation
his voice booming amongst the crowd



*They shall not grow old
as we that are left grow old*

*Age shall not weary them
nor the years condemn*

*At the going down of the sun
and in the morning*

We will remember them

Menin Gate

Wreaths laid on behalf of
the British Transport Police
and the British Transport
Police History Group





The German Cemetery at Langemark
 44,000 soldiers in a mass grave including
 thousands of young student volunteers.
 Four stone figures represent them all.



British Cemetery at Cement House named after a fortified farm-house. Immaculate headstones in contrast to the German cemetery at Langemark



Memorial to Harry Patch, the last surviving combatant of the Great War.



Located nearby.

Memorial to Welsh poet Ellis Humphrey Evans mortally wounded in 1917 at Pilkem Ridge.



Known also
as the
'Hedd Wyn'
memorial





The Welsh Memorial at Pilkem Ridge



From the left, Glyn Thomas, Phil White, Rob Davison, Bill Rogerson, Martin Lambert, Viv Head, Ed Thompson



All work and no play etc.
Hey you at the back there,
Wake Up!



Are we
nearly
there yet?

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917









Reservoir Cemetery at Ypres



St George's Chapel in
the 'English' area of
Ypres. Where the BTP
plaque was placed in
2009

